

A Balancing Act

Welcome to the first annual Special Review Issue of *Cell Host & Microbe*! The theme we have chosen this year is “Microbes and the Immune System.” The theme is broad and the collection of topics eclectic. And this is intentional. Given the broad scope of the journal, we chose a theme that could encompass a variety of topics representing the diversity of microbes and hosts. The topics range from how bacterial genome variability has influenced vaccine design (Telford, page 408) to the role of normal gut microbiota in inflammatory bowel diseases (Peterson et al., page 417) and how pathogens use host inflammation to their advantage (Pédrón and Sansonetti, page 344). You can pick up the Review Issue to read about strategies used by *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* to survive within the hostile environs of the macrophage (Pieters, page 399) and also learn about how HIV has evolved to outfox the host immune system (Malim and Emmerman, page 388). Maybe you are interested in innate immune sensing of microbes (Ishii et al., page 352) and will stay on to read about the role of microRNAs in viral infection and immunity (Gottwein and Cullen, page 375). You can ponder the mosquito’s immune defenses against the malarial parasite (Blandini et al., page 364) and consider the crosstalk between hormone and immune signaling in plants (Spoel and Dong, page 348). As you probably noticed from the cover, the common thread running through this Special Review Issue is the concept of balance, such as the one between microbes, both commensal and pathogenic, and the host immune system. Our hope is that even if what first attracts you is a review close to your own area of research, you might catch a glimpse of a more distantly related review that inspires you to think about the host-microbe balance in a new way.

This collection of reviews represents the dedicated efforts of all those involved—authors, reviewers, and editors. Of course, we are particularly indebted to the authors who have devoted their time to this project and who have worked with enthusiasm and patience to transform our fantasy into reality.

As you read on, we hope you find this eclectic collection of reviews both enjoyable and thought provoking.

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